

Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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WISE OR OTHERWISE

"Success," "failure." These are notable words in the vocabulary of human experience. Around them revolve the events of every life, the history of nations, the record of ages. From the standpoint of one who has traversed the pilgrimage of a generation, it is pathetic to look upon the eager throng of youth pressing upon the threshold of hope and ambition, and refusing the idea of failure to all their thoughts. Yet how many of them are doomed to failure, if not altogether, yet in part. The dull lethargy of that moral surrender which follows the death of hopefulness settles down upon them, and they go out of the battle wounded, and limping, and dying, and give no sign. Into some hidden spot they crawl and hide, and that is the last that is seen of them this side of the realm of utter forgetfulness. The world sweeps right on, and other throngs rush forward, as ill-prepared, as wrongly guided, as badly equipped, as those who went out and went down in the former generations.

Now and then one will cry out against his fate, and ask the question why he was singled out to be crushed beneath the Juggernaut of failure. That "why" is a word of vast suggestiveness. Who can answer it fully? One would have to go back of the man's life, and measure the quality of those pre-natal influences which had so much to do, so much more than we imagine, in determining his disposition, his moral quality, the fibre of his will. What manner of man was his father, and his father's father? What manner of influences encompassed his cradle, his boyhood, his bringing up? Back into all that past we must go for the profound "why." And in the generations to come the same questions will be asked concerning you and me. Will the future generations of our own flesh and blood "arise up and call us blessed?" The contemplation of moral and natural sequences is enough to stagger a giant. Behold, I am writing either "failure" or "success" for those who come after me.

Pity for the man who was not only set upon the wrong road by influences over which he had no control, but in addition to this initial calamity falls a victim to the blind guides. Such a one appealed recently to one of our great dailies for help and hope, and appealed in vain. That he should in his dire moral extremity hope for help from such a source is in itself sad evidence of the hopelessness of his case. His life had been a failure, and he was weary of it, even to the casting of it away, like a soiled and ragged garment. He "had nothing to live for." Think of it! Nothing to live for

and in a world where the opened eyes can see *so much* to live for, even for the humblest and most obscure; so much to live for, that God's provision of a glad eternity seems barely long enough for the expanding joy and glory of that fulness of life whose springs are felt in the redeemed soul. Nothing to live for! When an archangel might cry out, "give me room for the boundless wealth of this life." Less than an illimitable universe would have been far too strait a place for the sons of God, such destiny as you and I, and the humblest, and the poorest of the sons of men, may enter into thru all its wide open doors.

The great editor advised the poor wreck of a man to read the lives of great men, "such as Hannibal, Napoleon, Voltaire, Burke, Washington," etc. What awful profanation. What miserable drivel. Hannibal himself committed suicide after his life, devoted to revenge, had come to irretrievable failure. Napoleon deluged the world with blood, sat upon the pinnacle of ambition, wielded the sceptre of ultimate human power, and yet upon the history of no other man do we see in letters half so large the awful word FAILURE. Voltaire, a heartless wrecker along the stormy shore of time's turbulent sea, luring by false lights a million souls to utter ruin. Think of holding *him* up as an inspiration to a man shuddering upon the dark brink of self murder. It sounds like a ghastly jest in the ears of grim death. It startles us like a hollow laugh coming up out of hell, and ending in a wierd moan, like the lost winds in the barren branches of a trackless forest.

Some one in that same paper had the courage to utter one true word, some one who had happily found the only way out of the sorrow and ruin which has so long and so tragically involved the race. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." One would think that the world would run to this refuge of love, like a frightened child runs out of the dark into the welcoming arms of his mother. If this promise were believed and this invitation heeded, what would become of the world's unbearable troubles? Who would be left to chant its Jeremiads? A different song would attune the jubilant harps, and there would be "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Thankfulness for the blessings we receive is like the lock to the granary door. Left unlocked, the rich treasures of wheat are exposed to every sort of depredation and thievery, and are soon dissipated and devoured. We do not really possess our blessings until we are deeply thankful, even for the last.